

September 29, 2009

**FOOD STAMPS**  
**Special Notice**  
**09-05**

**CalWORKs**  
**Special Notice**  
**09-09**

**MEDI-CAL**  
**Special Notice**  
**09-08**

**CASH ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**  
**FOR IMMIGRANTS (CAPI)**  
**Special Notice**  
**09-02**

**GENERAL**  
**RELIEF**  
**Special Notice**  
**09-03**

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**Subject**                    **NEW FOOD STAMP COST- OF- LIVING ADJUSTMENTS (COLA)**  
**FOR FFY 2010 EFFECTIVE 10/01/09**

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**Effective Date**        Effective October 1, 2009

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**Reference**              All County Information Notice (ACIN) NO. I-61-09

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**Purpose**                  The purpose of this joint Special Notice (SN) is to:

- Inform staff that the Food Stamp COLA mass update process ran the weekend of September 4, 2009 for Food Stamps including PAFS, NAFS *and* TFS;
- Inform staff that the Food Stamp Program Guide (FSPG) **63-1100 Handbook Chapter**, has been updated and will be posted on the Internet, shortly;
- Provide staff with instructions for COLA implementation; and
- Provide staff with CalWIN Mass Update Reports.

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**Background**            The Food Stamp Act of 1977 provides annual COLA adjustments to allotments, certain deductions, and eligibility standards. The adjustments are effective every year on the first day of October. If October falls mid-quarter in a QR household, the COLA is effective October 1<sup>st</sup> and is treated as a county-initiated mid-quarter change.

Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), the maximum and minimum allotments for household size remain unchanged for FFY 2010. ARRA raised the maximum allotments by 13.6 percent of the June 2008 value and provided that benefits could not decline below this level.

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**Summary of  
Changes**

The following changes are part of the FFY 2010 COLA:

- The Gross/Net Income Eligibility Standards have been increased;
- The Excess Shelter Deduction\* has been increased to \$459;
- The Standard Deduction Amount changes according to the Eligible Food Stamp Household (EFSHH) size as follows:
  - 1-3 Eligible HH members = \$141 (decrease)
  - 4 Eligible HH members = \$153 (increase)
  - 5 Eligible HH members = \$179 (increase)
  - 6 or more Eligible HH members = \$205 (increase)

\*NOTE: There was no change in the Homeless Household Shelter Allowance (HHSA), currently \$143.

**Standard Utility Allowance (SUA)**

As a result of a waiver allowed by the U.S.D.A. Food and Nutrition Service, the SUA amount is unchanged and remains at \$287 for FFY 2010. Without the waiver, the SUA would have been reduced to \$271

**Limited Utility Allowance (LUA)**

The LUA amount increased from \$83 to \$88 for FFY 2010, effective October 1, 2009. A household that is not eligible for the SUA but incurs expenses for at least two separate utilities, other than heating and cooling, is eligible for a LUA.

**Telephone Utility Allowance (TUA)**

The TUA amount is unchanged and remains at \$20 for FFY 2010. A household that is not eligible for the SUA or LUA, but incurs a telephone expense or in its absence an equivalent form of communication, is eligible to receive a telephone deduction (TUA).

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**Maximum Food  
Stamp  
Allotments**

The Maximum Allotments for household size remain unchanged for FFY 2010.

Maximum Food Stamp Allotments								
Household Size								
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Each Additional Person
200	367	526	668	793	952	1052	1202	+150

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<b>Informing Notice</b>	State regulations do not require timely notice when processing a mass change. However, we are required to inform clients that a change will or has occurred in their food stamp allotment. This informing requirement can be met by displaying posters containing the information, in places accessible to clients. Households must be informed by October 1, 2009.
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Samples of the COLA informing posters (Attachments A and B) are attached to this SN. Family Resource Centers (FRC's) will need to post the notification in their lobbies and other areas frequented by clients. These posters must be posted no later than October 1, 2009 and must remain on display until November 30, 2009.

The attached FS 11 ENG/SP (08/09) "Notice To All Food Stamp Recipients" has been uploaded to iWAY for staff use if a household has additional questions regarding the COLA.

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<b>Food Stamp Handbook Chapter</b>
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<b>Revised Handbook Chapter</b>
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The revised Food Stamp Program Guide Handbook Chapter section 63-1100 will be uploaded to the online manuals on the internet and available to staff, shortly.

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<b>Forms Impact</b>
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The Assistance Standards Chart (Attachment C) has been updated to reflect the Food Stamp Program (FSP) COLA adjustments.

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<b>QR Impact</b>
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The Food Stamp COLAs are effective October 1, 2009 for Change and Quarterly Reporting (QR) Households. If October 1<sup>st</sup> falls Mid-Quarter in a Quarterly Reporting Household, the COLA is still effective October 1, 2009 and is treated as a county-initiated mid-quarter change.

- Staff are reminded of the requirement to discontinue NAFS cases that exceed the gross income level (130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level), when a recipient voluntarily reports income above the gross income level.

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**Transitional  
Food Stamps**

As maximum allotments were not increased, Transitional Food Stamps (TFS) will not be affected by the COLA.

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**Automation  
Impact**

The COLA mass update process ran the weekend of September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Cases containing Food Stamps were included in the run. The batch AU Exception indicators listed below were lifted during the COLA process. Once the COLA was completed, the Batch AU indicators were restored.

Type of Special Indicator	
CA - (CAPI)	Batch AU Exception-CA
CW - (CalWORKs)	Batch AU Exception-CW
FS - (Food Stamps)	Batch AU Exception-FS
GA - (General Relief)	Batch AU Exception-GA
MC – (Medi-Cal)	Batch AU Exception-MC
RC – (RCA)	Batch AU Exception-RC

The Income Limit, Standard Deductions, Maximum Excess Shelter Cost Standard Deduction, and Utility Allowance Reference Tables were updated in CalWIN Production September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009. The October 2009 budget calculations for the impacted cases will reflect these updates.

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**COLA  
Supplemental  
Reports**

The following reports are being distributed to the FRC's to further assist staff with case reviews. Every case on the "**ERROR WORKER DETAIL**" Report must be reviewed. Staff is required to review the EDBC results and manually authorize the cases as appropriate. The reports accompany this Special Notice.

- **ERROR WORKER DETAIL:** This report lists and describes errors encountered along with corresponding case number, case name, case status, and worker detail. Cases on this list have not been auto-authorized by CalWIN.
  - **CORRESPONDENCE DETAILS:** This report lists all the correspondence that was triggered during the COLA run on each case. Some correspondence was deleted, some was mailed in batch and some was held in the print queue for review. Please review the Correspondence Details list and all correspondence held in the print queue. Workers must delete any redundant or unnecessary correspondence in the print queue and print and mail any necessary correspondence.
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**Client  
Correspondence**

Workers must review the Correspondence Details report and all correspondence held in the print queue and take action to delete or print and mail as appropriate.

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**Medi-Cal, GR,  
CAPI, and  
CalWORKs  
Impact**

Medi-Cal, GR, CAPI, and CalWORKs HSS's with Food Stamp associated programs must continue to review their alerts and communications for impacts.

When EDBC is run on a case, CalWIN re-evaluates for all programs participants are eligible to and generates denials and/or approvals for all the evaluated programs. Staff must review the Correspondence Details report and evaluate the correspondence held in the print queue for appropriateness. Staff should print any necessary correspondence held in the print queue and mail it to participants.

ACCESS may receive phone calls on correspondence resulting from the COLA. If they do, they should review the NOA's that were generated from Client Correspondence to determine if they were issued appropriately.

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**HSS Actions**

If the case has a discrepancy, the FS COLA was not applied to the case. Staff must take corrective action to fix the discrepancy and authorize the case in order for the COLA to be applied.

Staff should complete the COLA corrections as soon as administratively feasible.

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**Quality  
Assurance  
(QA)/Quality  
Control (QC)  
Impact**

Effective with sample month of October 2009, both Quality Assurance and/or Quality Control staff will cite a dollar error (for OI or UI over \$25) when the increases to Gross and Net Income Standards, the Maximum Excess Shelter Deduction, and the increase to the Limited Utility Allotment are not applied in accordance with this Special Notice.

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**Assistant Deputy  
Director**

*(Original signed 9/28/09)*

**Kim Forrester**

Assistant Deputy Director

Administrative Support

Strategic Planning & Operational Support

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